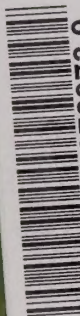


CAZON

DE

-68572



3 1761 11972973 9

Ont. Education dept.

[Statements by the Min. Of Education
to the Legislative assembly of Ontario]
French language schools. [1968]

STATEMENT BY: THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM G. DAVIS,
MINISTER OF EDUCATION FOR ONTARIO

CA20N
DE
-68572

REGARDING: FRENCH LANGUAGE SCHOOLS

[1968]

The legislation which I have the honour of introducing today, Mr. Speaker, can be truly termed historic, not only for this province but also, I believe, for Canada. It sets out the legal provisions for the establishment of French-language schools at both the elementary and secondary school levels. No specific statutory guarantee has ever before been made for French-language schools in Ontario.

Before dealing generally with the contents of the legislation, I should like to trace briefly the background leading up to the creation of the special Ministerial Committee on French-language secondary schools and the work of that Committee.

In August of last year, the Prime Minister, the Honourable John P. Robarts, speaking to the Association Canadienne des Educateurs de langue-française stated:

... we believe that Canadians of French origin must be guaranteed certain basic rights and privileges. We recognize and are in sympathy with your desire as French-speaking people in Canada to preserve your language, customs and culture as an integral part of Canadian life.

Although language is not the only means of preserving a culture, it is the most central and obvious means. In the first volume of the final Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, entitled "The Official Languages," the relationship between language and culture is succinctly put:

... language is in the first place an essential expression of a culture in the full sense of the word; from the intellectual standpoint language is certainly the most typical expression of culture. As a means of communication, language is the natural vehicle for a host of other elements of culture. It fulfils this function in many ways. Not only does it convey the notions and modes of expression which are part of a culture, it is also the means by which a cultural group discovers and assimilates new elements originating outside it.

It is in this context that the French-speaking community in Ontario has always looked upon education as one of the most important, if not the most important, force for survival as a cultural group. Education in his mother tongue permits the Franco-Ontarian to receive the values of his society and his way of life in the same way an English-speaking Ontarian does in schools where English is the language of instruction and communication. Both for himself and his children the Franco-Ontarian wants to preserve his linguistic and cultural heritage. This natural desire is not an attempt to draw a curtain around or to shut out the overwhelming presence of English-speaking North America. On the contrary, the desire of the Franco-Ontarian to live in a French milieu is perfectly harmonious with the equal desire to contribute fully to the cultural, economic and technical progress of his province and of his country. It is with these considerations in mind that the government approached the question of French-language education in this province.

It is important to note that French as a language of instruction in Ontario schools can be traced to the early French settlements. The use of

French, then, as a language of instruction is not something new in this province.

Today we find that there is a well-established system of education in which instruction may be given in the French language to the end of grade eight and, in some cases, to the end of grade ten. This latter arrangement evolved at the end of the last century when many elementary schools also provided grades nine and ten because the nearest secondary school was too far away.

It must be clearly understood then that historically the principle of bilingual education for the French-speaking people of Ontario has been recognized. By compromise and agreement this principle has gradually been extended until today the availability of French-language education at the elementary level is quite substantial.

In September 1967 there were 89,483 French-speaking pupils attending elementary schools in which French was a language of instruction. Of these

87,024 attended 372 French-language separate schools and the remaining 2,459 attended 13 French-language public schools.

At the secondary level there are, at the present time, schools in some forty communities offering an instructional program in French in at least one or more of the following subjects: History, Geography, Latin and, of course, Français. As of September 1967 there were 10,541 pupils registered in the schools offering one or more of these courses. In addition 5,121 French-speaking pupils were attending the grades nine and ten of the separate schools and 3,030 pupils were in private Franco-Ontarian institutions.

Several years ago, negotiations took place whereby the University of Ottawa became eligible for full participation in provincial government grants along with the other universities of the province. Both Laurentian University and the University of Ottawa receive grants in excess of the pattern for other institutions to assist them to meet the costs inherent in carrying on programs in both English and French.

In the area of Teacher Education, there are two bilingual Teachers'

Colleges operated by the Province. One is in Ottawa and a second bilingual Teachers' College was established three years ago at Sudbury in accommodation provided at Laurentian University.

The major problem which has faced a great many of the French-speaking graduates of the elementary schools is that, apart from the four courses previously mentioned, all secondary education is given in English. This has placed a severe handicap on the French-speaking student who moves from a school in which most of his subjects are taught in French, to one in which practically all the instruction is in English. The result has been an inordinately high rate of drop-outs among the young people of the Franco-Ontarian community.

In effect three choices have, in the past few years, presented themselves to the Franco-Ontarian student at the end of the elementary school:

a) If his parents had sufficient funds he could go to

a denominational private school where French

was the language of instruction. However these

institutions did not offer the wide range of courses found in the other secondary schools of the province. They offered basically the five year academic course but not the technical and vocational programs of the public system.

- b) In certain public secondary schools History, Geography, Latin and Français were offered in French but no technical or vocational courses were given in that language.
- c) Finally the Franco-Ontarian student had the option of attending the English- language composite secondary school in his community. Yet it is difficult, after four or five years, for the student to retain anything but a tenuous connection with the French language and culture.

This, then was the problem. At the secondary level steps had to be taken to extend the availability of instruction in the language of the Franco-

Ontarian community. It was with these thoughts in mind that the Prime Minister, last August, stated that the Government of Ontario would aim to provide, within the public school system of Ontario, secondary schools in which the language of instruction was French. This decision was but the logical extension of the program of French-language instruction at the elementary level and complemented the present bilingual university program.

The Prime Minister announced, on that occasion, that:

... The Government of Ontario will direct the Department of Education to proceed with the establishment of a committee whose terms of reference will be to advise the Government as to the procedures required to provide adequate opportunities in the public education system for those who are primarily French-speaking.

It was very clearly stated that it was not proposed to develop another system of secondary schools parallel to the existing framework. Rather, within the present system, the fullest possible range of programs and options in the French language would be offered. He emphasized that the province was not creating

an exclusively French-language system of education. Special attention would have to be paid to the teaching of English in the new schools so that the graduates of the French-language secondary schools would be able to compete with their English-speaking compatriots on the labour market and participate fully in the life of this province and this country. As the new schools would be part of the existing public system they would receive the same financial aid as other secondary schools.

In November 1967 I announced the creation of a Committee on French-language Secondary Schools. The Chairman of the Committee is Mr. Roland R. Bériault of the Department of Education's Policy and Development Council. The members of the Committee are: Mr. H. A. Blanchard, Assistant Director, Teacher Education Branch; Mr. Thomas Campbell, Executive Assistant to the Deputy Minister; Mr. H. W. Cyr, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum Section; Dr. L. Desjarlais, Dean of the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Education; Brother Omer Deslauriers, President of the Franco-Ontarian Private Schools Association; Mr. Vincent

Gauthier, Administrator of the Ontario Bilingual School Trustees

Association; Mrs. Elise Grossberg, a member of the Toronto Board of

Education and Chairman of the Ontario School Trustees Council; Brother

Maurice Lapointe, Principal of La-Salle Academy in Ottawa and 2nd

Vice-President of the Ontario Teachers' Federation; Mr. Jacques Leduc,

Vice-President of l'Association Canadienne-française d'Education d'Ontario;

and Mr. A.H. McKague, Superintendent of the Supervision Section. The

Secretary is Mr. Charles Beer of the Federal-Provincial Affairs Secretariat

in the Treasury Department.

The membership of the Committee reflects not only the French- and English-speaking people of the province, but also the various groups and associations concerned with education in Ontario. In this way the Government ensured it would receive the best possible advice. The twelve Committee members have met for two days every two weeks since early December to suggest the ways and means by which the Government could implement the policy enunciated by the Prime Minister. I should like to take this occasion

to commend them publicly for their work.

The first and most immediate task of the Committee was to study the legal and procedural requirements needed to provide the guarantees necessary for the establishment of the French-language secondary schools wherever the numbers could provide a viable unit. It was soon evident that this question of French-language instruction at the secondary level could not be viewed in isolation. It had to be examined in the light of practices at the elementary level. For this reason the Committee also prepared legislation concerning French-language elementary schools.

I shall touch briefly, Mr. Speaker, on the legislation itself.

The legislation proposed by the Government involves amendments to three Acts:

The Department of Education Act;

The Schools Administration Act, which I have introduced today; and

The Secondary Schools and Boards of Education Act, which will also be introduced on this occasion.

The amendment to the Department of Education Act, which will be considered as part of the general amendment to that bill, will give the Minister of Education the power to make regulations prescribing the language of instruction which may be used in the elementary and secondary schools of the Province.

Amendments are being introduced today to the Schools Administration Act. They cover the legal provision for establishing French-language elementary schools or classes; and the language of instruction and communication used by teachers in the schools and classes themselves.

The amendment that I have introduced to the Secondary Schools and Boards of Education Act will add a new Part to the Act to establish French-language secondary schools and classes.

At the secondary level the ideal situation, in our view, would be the establishment of French-language composite schools providing all options and programs. Such a situation, we believe, can be achieved in some areas, but

the government recognizes that due to a shortage of pupils this cannot be done everywhere. It has, therefore, proposed legislation to cover a variety of cases.

Three basic situations have to be provided for:

- 1) Classes for "Français" and other subjects
- 2) French-language branches or sections within
a Secondary School, and
- 3) French-language composite schools.

In some areas it may only be possible to provide one class of Français and perhaps one or two other subjects in French. In other areas a complete Arts and Science program and some commercial subjects could be started. The intent of the legislation is, however, that a divisional board will provide the fullest program possible.

The requirements for establishing a French-language composite school will be the same as those used to create English-language composite schools.

At the present time such schools are built for a student population of 1,000,

although inherent in all the policies of the Department of Education this is not always rigidly adhered to. In some instances composite schools have been set up for less than this number, if the situation warranted. The policy of the Department of Education is to project secondary school enrolment on a five year basis using forty to forty-five per cent of the pupil population in the elementary schools as a base. In this way plans will be made for the construction of French-language composite schools using fundamentally the same criteria.

To represent the views of the Franco-Ontarian community to the divisional board, a special committee is being created within each divisional area. The name given this committee is the French Language Committee. The French Language Committee will be composed of seven members, four of whom will be elected by the French-speaking ratepayers of a division. The remaining three members would be trustees appointed by the board.

The procedure required to create a French Language Committee will be as follows:

a) If ten or more French-speaking ratepayers of a school

division apply in writing to the divisional board for

French-language instruction; or

b) if the board introduces or plans to introduce a

program of French-language instruction; or

c) if the board extends an existing French-language

program.

These stipulations would cover all situations and permit the Franco-Ontarians to make recommendations on the whole question of French-language instruction at the secondary level, whether it be a composite school, a branch or section within a secondary school or classes within a secondary school.

The method of electing the four French-speaking ratepayers to the French Language Committee will be for the divisional board to call a general meeting of all French-speaking ratepayers within the divisional area. Once elected the names of the four members will be forwarded to the board.

The most important function of the French Language Committee will be to make recommendations to meet the educational and cultural needs of the

French-speaking pupils.

Yet it must be kept clearly in mind that the final decision and the final responsibility for the French-language secondary schools will rest with the divisional board elected by all the people of the divisional area. The French Language Committee will report at each regular meeting of the board and will act in a way similar to that of an advisory committee. We are not creating another school board.

The legislation also provides that English shall be an obligatory daily subject of instruction for all pupils of grades nine to twelve. In addition to acquiring a complete command of the French language and culture, the Franco-Ontarian student will need a complementary and adequate knowledge of English. A great deal of work has been done within the Department of Education to prepare special English courses for French-speaking pupils.

In a study prepared for the Ontario Curriculum Institute (now a part of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) in 1965 entitled "English as a Second Language," the following definition was given of what could be expected

of the bilingual graduate of a French-language secondary school:

(1) [He should] have gained a knowledge of French that

is as complete as the level of intellectual abilities

of the average graduate of these institutions will

allow. French is his dominant and first language

and should be studied with cultural as well as

pragmatic aims in view. His knowledge and

command of French must allow him to live fully

his life as a Canadian of French descent who can

benefit from and actively participate in the

cultural life of the French-speaking Canadians

and of the members of the French world community.

(2) [He should] have gained a pragmatic and instrumental

knowledge of English which will allow him to

(a) communicate effectively with his English-

speaking compatriots;

(b) meet the competition of English-speaking

workers of equal occupational skill;

(c) take part in the political, civic and social

activities of his community.

(3) [He should] have gained an understanding, after having

acquired the basic linguistic skills, of the value systems

and cultural patterns of his English-speaking compatriots.

The government believes this to be a reasonable goal for the French-language secondary schools to try to attain. The Franco-Ontarians themselves have often stated the need to acquire an effective command of English.

The legislation concerning the French-language elementary schools parallels that for the secondary schools. Provisions for French-language classes and schools are set out. English, as a subject of instruction, for French-speaking pupils is made obligatory from grade five on.

Finally it should be emphasized that this legislation does not encroach upon the rights of the members of the English-speaking community to have their

own classes or schools, wherever feasible. The establishment of English-language elementary and secondary schools and classes is provided for.

And provisions are also made by which an English-speaking pupil will be permitted to take his courses in the French-language schools.

These then are the major aspects and history of the legislation. With the creation of French-language schools at the secondary level, there will be assured to every French-speaking student in the province the opportunity to receive his education from kindergarten through university, graduate school and teacher education in the language of his first choice.

There is one last point, Mr. Speaker, which I believe cannot be underestimated. Since the Prime Minister's speech of last August local school boards have proceeded with the implementation of the government's policy on French-language education for French-speaking pupils. This has been especially encouraging for it means that French-language schools and classes will begin in several centres this coming September although the legislation itself is tied in with the divisional boards of January, 1969. It indicates that

the divisional boards and the French Language Committees already have a precedent for working together harmoniously and effectively.

The legislation presented today provides the framework for the new schools. Its implementation will allow French-speaking Canadians in Ontario to maintain their rich heritage and to contribute a positive influence in this province and in Canada. I am confident that in the next few years French-language instruction in this province will be the equal of that given anywhere in the country.

